

Our pupils Ana Gaona and Laura Sanmiguel represented the European Schools at the 2009 edition of the European Union Contest for Young Scientists (EUCYS) in Paris.

By Debra Gregory
ES Alicante Biology teacher



“There will be some winners, but no losers.” Words from Luisa Prista, Head of Unit for Scientific culture and gender issues of the European Commission during the opening speeches of this year’s European Union Contest for Young Scientists (EUCYS).

The EUCYS hosted over 150 students from 39 countries, presenting 89 different science projects in all, over 5 days in the majestic setting of the Palais de la Découverte in Paris.

The participants representing the European Schools, Ana Gaona and Laura Sanmiguel, currently in Year 6 in the Anglophone section, had won the 2009 European Schools Science Symposium, held this year in Frankfurt. Their project looked at the feasibility of using food waste from the School canteen to provide energy to heat the School in winter, and was judged in the Engineering category of the EUCYS contest this September 2009.

A panel of 17 judges from all scientific disciplines made numerous visits to all contestants, each asking probing questions about the projects. Prizes ranged from the 7000 euros on offer for the first prizes, to special donated prizes from EIROforum, including visits to EMBL and ESA and from the European Patent Office for originality.

So, obviously there were going to be several winners in a formal sense, unfortunately not including our representatives, but everybody who participated gained something: knowledge, new friends, the opportunity to have their work judged by international experts from the various branches of science, a visit to a new city... the list is endless.

Not that it was all work and no play! The organisers had worked extremely hard to put together events at the end of the day to allow the candidates to socialise: a trip along the River Seine, dinner up the Eiffel Tower, a visit to the Musée des Arts et Métiers and the Cité des Sciences et de l’Industrie.

It was a wonderful few days for everybody involved and inspirational for all of the young scientists present. They had the opportunity to listen to many eminent scientists speak including Claudie Haigneré, the first female European astronaut and Jean Jouzel, the vice-president of the International Panel on Climate Change. What is most worrying is that the number of young people entering the field of science today is falling; let’s hope that through the European Schools Science Symposium and events such as the EUCYS, many more young people will be able to participate in the joy of discovery, learning and knowledge to ensure that Science continues to have its rightful place in today’s society.